



## ***Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks***

P.O. Box 1630  
Miles City, MT 59301  
(406) 234-0900  
Fax 234-4368

February 7, 2018

### **PUBLIC SCOPING NOTICE**

Re: North Sunday Creek Conservation Easement Proposal

Dear Interested Party:

#### **Proposed Project Description**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) will be preparing an Environmental Analysis on a proposal to purchase a Conservation Easement on approximately 14,783 deeded acres in Custer and Rosebud Counties, Montana. Please see the attached map for general location and property boundary.

Conservation easements are partnerships between FWP and willing private landowners to conserve important native wildlife habitats and provide public recreational access. The landowner receives financial compensation in exchange for adopting the conservation and public access covenants of the easement while continuing to operate their agricultural operation

The proposed easement, called the "North Sunday Creek Conservation Easement," is approximately 90% undisturbed native grasslands and sagebrush grasslands. The ranch provides year-round habitat for traditional grassland species such as antelope, mule deer, sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse. The ranch also supports a diversity of nongame, sagebrush obligate species.

A conservation easement would conserve and enhance this important block of sagebrush grassland habitat from conversion to other cover types, benefitting wildlife and agriculture, while also providing for managed public hunting and recreational opportunities. The anticipated funding for the proposed easement would come from three sources: Habitat Montana funds derived from hunting license sales, Pittman-Robertson funds derived from federal excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition and NRCS Agricultural Lands Easements funding. Placing a conservation easement on the property would have no effect on the taxable base of the property

### **Project Objectives**

The primary objectives of this land project are to provide conservation and enhancement of native sagebrush grassland habitats while maintaining traditional agricultural land uses and provide public hunting and recreational opportunity in an area composed largely of private lands.

### **Public Involvement and Process**

Formal public participation specific to FWP's proposed purchase of this conservation easement begins with this scoping process. Public scoping comments will help in the development of a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) which would be available for a 30-day public review. Land projects also require approval from the Fish & Wildlife Commission and the Montana State Board of Land Commissioners.

FWP is requesting public input and comments (scoping) on the proposed project from **February 9, 2018 to March 2, 2018**. Please submit written comments regarding the proposed project to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Attn: North Sunday Creek Conservation Easement Proposal, P.O. Box 1630, Miles City, MT 59301 or email comments to: [satwood@mt.gov](mailto:satwood@mt.gov) with the subject line: North Sunday Creek Conservation Easement Proposal.

If you have any questions regarding this project or scoping process, please contact Steve Atwood, FWP Wildlife Biologist, at (406) 234-0942 or e-mail questions to [satwood@mt.gov](mailto:satwood@mt.gov).

Thank you for your time and consideration of this proposed conservation easement project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Schmitz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brad Schmitz  
Regional Supervisor  
Region 7

Figure 1: Boundary of the proposed conservation easement.

